

The Historical Trail 1988



SANCTUARY BUILT 1932. BUILDING JOINING THE FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE AND SANCTUARY BUILT IN 1957.



AMR. ALLEGAN

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The Rev. Anna Oliver

ANNA OLIVER
1840-1892

A century ago a few women in our church served as evangelists; a few held a "Local Preacher's License," the first step toward ordination. But until Anna Oliver came along, no woman pressed the matter of ordination and full clergy rights among the Methodists.

Following undergraduate studies and a Masters Degree with honors from a fine New York City woman's college in 1862, Oliver taught school in Connecticut and dabbled in temperance work. After the Civil War (1868) she volunteered as a home missionary to teach black children in Mississippi. She resigned a year later when she found that the Mission Board was paying male teachers twice as much. Moving north to Cincinnati, she studied art and took up temperance work again. Here she felt called to the ministry and, despite unbelievable obstacles, earned the bachelor of divinity degree from a Methodist seminary (Boston, 1876), the first woman in America to attain that degree. Following graduation Oliver served pastorates in New Jersey and New York. Supported by her New York City parish, she brought the first test case on the ordination of women before the 1880 General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Although the Church refused to permit women to be ordained, Anna Oliver served as a powerful model for women of her generation. It would take 75 more years before full clergy rights were granted to women.

The Historical Trail

Yearbook of the Historical Society and the
Commission on Archives and History of the
Southern New Jersey Annual Conference of the
United Methodist Church

Penny Moore, President of the Historical Society
Walter Jesuncosky, Chairman on Archives and History

FOREWORD

Dear Friends,

This year is of special historic significance to your president because my husband and I are chairmen of the 125th Anniversary Committee of the South Seaville Camp Meeting — the oldest in the state. Having researched the history, I thought it appropriate to include a few of my notes in this issue.

Also, may I personally add a word of thanks for your continued support through yearly dues. Each one of you is important to the ongoing plans for programs and trips of interest as well as keeping alive the historical data that makes up the Southern New Jersey Conference.

We thank each of you who have contributed articles in the past and continue to add notes of historical interest to all of us. Other articles included are: *The Rev. Anna Oliver: A Genuine Reformer* by Alfredo T. Cintron; *South Seaville Camp Meeting Ground: Celebrates 125 Years, 1863-1988* by Penny Moore; *The Roots of Methodism in Gloucester County* by Robert B. Steelman; and *History of the Kynett United Methodist Church* by Muriel Tooker.

PENNY MOORE

THE ROOTS OF METHODISM IN GLOUCESTER COUNTY

by Robert B. Steelman

(Based on an Address given to the members of the Harrison Township Historical Society in the Ewan United Methodist Church, March 29, 1987).

INTRODUCTION

United Methodism in Gloucester County has deep roots. Bishop Asbury designed the church at Aura. Bethel Church in Hurffville was one of the first to be organized in New Jersey. An early church near Clarksboro had a George Whitefield convert as its preacher. John Early, converted by John Wesley, was the first Methodist in the county and one of the first in the state. Old Stone Church near Swedesboro is the second oldest Methodist building in New Jersey. The first recorded Quarterly Conference in New Jersey was in Gloucester County. Evangelical Church, Clarksboro, is the oldest former Evangelical United Brethren Church in the Conference.

Take a map of Gloucester County. Draw a circle touching Aura, Hurffville, Mantua, Clarksboro and Swedesboro. You will have covered the major points of origin of Gloucester County Methodism. From these centers Methodism moved into the surrounding areas of the County.

This paper will attempt to delineate the beginnings of the former Methodist Episcopal Church within the confines of this county. Gloucester County Methodism is important because it was from there that Methodism spread into the counties below.

I. The Planting of Methodism by Lay Folk

The first thing to understand in the roots of Gloucester County Methodism is the role played by the lay people. Methodism was not introduced into the county by Methodist preachers. It was started by the laity.

JOHN EARLY

John Early was the first. He was an Irishman, as were Philip Embury and Robert Strawbridge, two of the first Methodists in America. John Early was born in an Irish Catholic home in 1738. As a young man he learned the trade of carpenter. Converted by John Wesley on one of his trips to the Emerald Isle, John became a Methodist. As a result, he was disowned by his family and emigrated to America in 1764, settling in what was known as the "Irish Tenth," comprising parts of what is now

Gloucester, Camden and Atlantic Counties. He ran a saw mill and built his home along Still Run Creek in Elk Township near Aura.

Just when and under what circumstances Early began to practice his Methodist faith and witness to Christ is not known. However, at his death in 1828, he was said to have been a Methodist for sixty years. That would make the date 1768. His home was long a preaching place for Bishop Asbury and other early Methodist Circuit riders. His eldest son William became a Methodist preacher. John was a trustee of the Union Church at Aura; Bethel Church, Hurffville; the Old Stone Church, Swedesboro; and Friendship Church near Monroeville just across the county line.

BETHEL CHURCH

This brings us to Bethel Church, Hurffville, and its cadre of leading laymen. Bethel was one of the early centers of south Jersey and Gloucester County Methodism. Leading laymen like John Early, Daniel Bates, and the brothers John and Benjamin Turner were all associated with this church. The exact date of the building of the first Church cannot be clearly ascertained, but it was evidently in use by the early 1770's at least.

That Bethel was the leading church in the county is evidenced by the fact that it became the head of a circuit — Bethel Circuit, in 1790. Bishop Asbury preached at Bethel at least seven times between 1786 and 1814.

JESSE CHEW

The third root of Gloucester County Methodism takes us to the home of Jesse Chew. Leaving Mantua on the road to Glassboro, just before crossing the railroad tracks on the right was the home of this venerable "father" of Methodism. Jesse Chew was a pioneer Methodist at Carpenter's Bridge, as Mantua was once known. His home was often visited by the circuit riders, and Bishop Asbury knew him as a personal friend. When Asbury dedicated the present Pleasant Mills Church near Batsto in 1809, he recorded in his *Journal*, "Whom should I see but dear aged Jesse Chew and his wife!" Jesse was then seventy-one years of age.

Of historic significance for New Jersey Methodism is the fact that the first recorded Quarterly Meeting (forerunner of our present Charge Conference) in the state was held at Mantua. Thomas Rankin's *Journal* for August 15, 1774 says: "I set off, in company with a friend to the Quarterly Meeting at Mantua Creek, West Jersey. I preached in the evening and many were affected." In November he again held a Quarterly Meeting at Mantua Creek, but this time Rankin states it was held "at Jesse Chew's near Mantua."

EAST GREENWICH — MOUNT ROYAL AND CLARKSBORO

Moving in our circle around Gloucester County we come to East Greenwich Township and the Clarksboro - Mount Royal area. The work here is the result of the Christian labors and influence of Edward Evans. Mr. Evans was converted in Philadelphia in 1740 by George Whitefield and for the rest of his life was an exemplary Christian. When Joseph Pilmore arrived in Philadelphia in 1769, along with Richard Boardman as John Wesley's first appointed preachers to America, Evans united with them. Sometime prior to Pilmore's arrival in America the Evans family moved to Greenwich. Probably through his influence a Union Church was built and used by members of various denominations including the Episcopalians. However, Evans seemed to have done most of the preaching. In fact, I can find no record of any other Methodist preaching here until after Evans' death on October 13, 1771.

In 1774, this Greenwich Chapel became a Protestant Episcopal Church, now St. Peter's at Clarksboro. The Methodists then built another chapel on the road between Mount Royal and Mantua. In 1789, this church was placed on wheels and moved to Gibbstown. By 1823 the building was abandoned and those who were left in the congregation attended meetings in Paulsboro.

However, Greenwich enjoys the distinction with Trenton of being the first Methodist circuits established in New Jersey during the years 1774 and 1775. We are fortunate to have preserved the *Journal* of William Duke while he served the Greenwich Circuit from December 8, 1775 to February 3, 1776. It is difficult to tell all the places he preached as most are identified only by somebody's name. The circuit did extend from Gloucester to Salem. Duke is known to have preached at Greenwich, Bethel, Mantua, Jesse Chew's, Aura, Pennsville and points in between.

OLD STONE CHURCH — SWEDESBORO

We complete our circle of Methodist roots with the mention of the Old Stone or Adams Meeting House near Swedesboro. Built in 1793 or 1794, this historic edifice, now used only for anniversary services, is the second oldest Methodist Church building in the state of New Jersey and the oldest in Gloucester County. John Early was one of the original trustees of this church. It was out of the Old Stone Church that Bethesda Church in Swedesboro was formed in 1838.

Thus by 1794, the roots of Methodism were firmly planted around the county at Aura — Hurffville — Mantua — Greenwich and Swedesboro. It was planted primarily through the influence of lay people. John Early was the foremost. But at Bethel there was also Daniel Bates and the

Turner brothers. Jesse Chew was at Mantua, Edward Evans in Greenwich and John Adams at the Old Stone Church.

II. Methodism Grows Through The Work of the Circuit Riders

Methodism was planted in Gloucester County through the influence of lay people. It grew through the work of the Circuit Riders. These stalwart warriors of Christ literally gave themselves up for his work. In the first fifty years of organized Methodism in America, the average circuit rider preached less than fifteen years and over half died before reaching their thirty-fifth birthday. Their travels were extensive, their hardships many, their pay meager at best. The proverbial expression in bad weather, "there'll be nobody out in this weather but crows and Methodist preachers," was probably true. Who were some of these early preachers who travelled through Gloucester County?

WILLIAM DUKE

I have already mentioned William Duke, whose 1775 *Journal* records his travels on the early Greenwich Circuit. He was only eighteen years old when appointed to this circuit, yet he had been preaching for two years. He served five years as a Methodist preacher, then located in Maryland. Later he was ordained into the Protestant Episcopal priesthood and ended his career as a teacher.

THOMAS RANKIN

Thomas Rankin deserves more credit than is usually given him. His disagreements with Asbury, his return to England during the Revolution, and the subsequent greatness of Asbury, all overshadow the significant early contribution of the man who, while he was in America, 1773 to 1778, was John Wesley's "General Assistant and Superintendent" of American Methodism. For those five early years Rankin led in the growth and early development of Methodism. He instituted annual meetings and appointments of the preachers, exercised a discipline among the ranks, began holding quarterly meetings in the circuits and spent much time in New Jersey.

I have already told of the first recorded quarterly meeting he conducted in Greenwich in 1774. His *Journal* records preaching in Mantua, Greenwich and Jesse Chew's.

CAPTAIN THOMAS WEBB

Captain Thomas Webb whom many call "the father of Methodism in New Jersey" most certainly preached in Gloucester County. This one-eyed, former British army captain, did more than anyone else to advance the Methodist cause in its formative years. He even paid from his per-

sonal funds the travel costs to America of some of the first preachers from England. Webb lost an eye in the French and Indian War. He made an imposing appearance dressed in his "regimentals," often with a sword dangling at his side, and wearing a green eye patch. And could he preach? John Adams, after hearing Webb preach at Old St. George's in Philadelphia remarked, "He is one of the most fluent, eloquent men I ever knew."

As a former British officer, Webb was arrested during the Revolution and deported back to England. Prior to that time he lived in Burlington and Pemberton. A trusted friend and confidant of Rankin, Webb often accompanied his friend on his preaching journeys. So he must have preached here more than once. Certainly he would have been well known by the early Methodists of this County.

BENJAMIN ABBOTT

Benjamin Abbott was a Salem County convert who preached widely throughout south Jersey and beyond following his conversion in 1772. He became a regular traveling preacher from 1789 until his death in 1796. During the Revolution it is said "he single-handedly kept alive the fires of Methodism in Jersey."

Abbott was an uncommon man. Prior to his conversion at the age of forty-five he loved to drink, fight and gamble. After his conversion he became as holy a man as before he was unholy. Virtually unlearned, he learned to read the Bible and didn't know why he needed to read anything else. They said he murdered the king's English when he preached, but he knew how to bring sinners to Christ and to lead Christians to a deeper life of faith and love. His services sometimes lasted hours, his emotionalism led to occasional excesses, but he led thousands to Christian conversion and hundreds to the experience of Christian holiness.

From his home in nearby Salem County and his preaching on neighboring circuits, it is doubtful if any Methodists alive in Gloucester County during Abbot's lifetime did not hear him preach. His sketchy memoirs note preaching at Bethel, Jesse Chew's and Mantua.

BISHOP FRANCIS ASBURY

Students of early Methodist history might recall to mind other early circuit riders such as Caleb Pedicord, Thomas Ware from Greenwich in Cumberland County, the Cromwell brothers, Richard Sneath, Richard Swain, Samuel Budd, Peter Vannest, John Walker, David Bartine and Richard W. Petherbridge among many others who rode the circuits of old Gloucester County. They tied the early Methodist classes and socie-

ties together, faithfully preached the Word in private homes, one-room school houses, in the woods, at camp meetings, an occasional tavern, and the few churches early called simply "meeting houses."

I have saved until now reference to Methodism's most famous leader, its pioneer bishop, the one who more than any molded the character and chartered the destiny of American Methodism — Bishop Francis Asbury. Twenty-seven years old when he came to America in 1771, he rode his horses nearly one quarter of a million miles from Canada to Georgia, the Atlantic to the frontiers of America in Kentucky and Tennessee. Annually he covered this vast field and preached an average of one sermon a day for those forty-five years. "Father" Asbury was Mr. Methodism, known and loved wherever he went. He was probably the best known religious figure in America. To one English correspondent he said "just send my mail postmarked 'America.' Sooner or later I will get it."

Francis Asbury crossed and recrossed New Jersey many times and conducted some rather extensive preaching tours. Altogether about 100 preaching places of Asbury have been identified within the Southern New Jersey Conference.

Nine different years he visited Gloucester County beginning in 1772 while stationed in Philadelphia before becoming a bishop. He made five visits to the County that year, preaching all five times in Greenwich. He also preached at Mantua, twice at Jesse Chew's, two times at the home of Thomas Taper who lived a mile and a half from Mantua, at either John or Benjamin Turner's near Hurffville, and twice at Squire Price's between Greenwich and Gloucester City.

Other visits were made as bishop in 1786 when he served communion at Sandstown or Mount Royal, 1789, 1791, 1802, 1806, 1807, 1809 and 1814 only two years before he died. Besides those places already mentioned the venerable bishop preached at Aura, Daniel Bates', Bethel, Clonmell, John Early's and Woodbury. The church at Aura was built upon the plan Asbury furnished them.

III. Circuits Are Established

Our story of the roots of Methodism in Gloucester County has thus far established the beginning places at John Early's in Elk Township near Aura, Bethel Church at Hurffville, Jesse Chew's near Mantua, the old Greenwich Chapel built by Edward Evans near Mount Royal and the Old Stone Church near Swedesboro. Lay people were involved in all of this.

Then came the itinerant circuit riders led by Thomas Rankin, Captain Webb, William Duke, Benjamin Abbott, Bishop Asbury and others whose preaching solidified the societies, as they were known, built up the faith, brought new converts into the Kingdom and continually enlarged the work.

The Methodist way was to establish a class in a particular place, the circuit rider would carefully select a class leader who would look after the little flock and add that class as one of his preaching places on the circuit. As a class grew others would be formed until two or more made a society. In time the society would elect trustees, who in turn would purchase land for the society and build a church.

WEST JERSEY CIRCUIT

The first circuit established here was the Greenwich Circuit, 1774 and 1775. War years then hindered the Methodist work. From 1776 to 1778 all of New Jersey was one circuit. In 1779, it was New Jersey and Philadelphia, then New Jersey again in 1780. Methodism was beginning to grow again in 1780 and the three appointed preachers that year, William Gill, John James and Richard Garrettson did fantastic work. Methodism was on the move. The West Jersey Circuit, embracing all of Methodism south of Trenton was formed in 1781. Little information about this extensive circuit has survived other than statistics showing 375 members after one year, increasing to 557 white members and 8 black members by 1787.

SALEM CIRCUIT

The West Jersey Circuit disappeared after 1787 and south Jersey Methodism became part of the Salem Circuit with three preachers assigned to it. This vast circuit covered all of Methodism in what are now Salem, Gloucester, Camden, Cumberland, Atlantic and Cape May Counties. While the circuit plan has not survived it was probably either a three or four week circuit. That means that it took each preacher that long to make the rounds of the circuit, preaching nearly every evening and two or three times a Sunday. He would then rest a week and start out again. Preaching would be about every other week at each appointment, oftener, maybe, at a few "chief" appointments.

Beginning in May of 1789, a 170 year old copy of the original circuit Steward's book has survived along with a fifty year old copy of that. It list the receipts from each class or preaching place along with circuit disbursements, all in pounds, shillings and twopence.

Known Gloucester County preaching places were: Bethel, Clonmells, Chew's, William Dilk's, Driver's near Barnsboro, and Sandtown. One of the Quarterly Meetings was held at Bethel June 20, 1790. Interesting expenses, besides the preachers salaries, expenses and Conference monies were for a book to record baptisms, to buy a coffin, for a poor woman, expenses at a tavern, employ of a local preacher, half gallon of wine for the ordinances, and for a poor sick woman.

BETHEL CIRCUIT

In 1790, Gloucester, Camden and Atlantic County, the old Gloucester County, left the Salem Circuit to form Bethel Circuit. It was named after the Bethel Church, Hurffville and lasted through 1802. When formed the circuit had 403 white and 2 colored members. At the end of the decade membership grew to 741 white and 27 colored.

The only significant information for this circuit comes from the diary of Rev. Richard Sneath for 1798-1799 when he served the circuit. He was then forty-seven years old, but had been preaching only two years. The diary of his preaching travels unfolds the continuing growth of Methodism in Gloucester County. Sneath's typical route of his circuit took him from Bethel down the Tuckahoe Road to Doughty's Tavern, over to Mays Landing, down to English Creek, Bargaintown and Absecon to Port Republic, then up to Batsto, through Egg Harbor and up the present Route 30 to Tansboro, Williamstown and Bethel. From there he traveled to Barnsboro, Clonmell, Sandtown, Swedesboro and Clarksboro.

His list of preaching places includes John Early's and Union Chapel, Aura, Williamstown, Daniel Bates' at Hurffville, Bethel Church, Mary Turner at Hurffville, John Turner at Turnersville, Clonmell near Mount Royal, Sandtown (the present Mount Royal), Adams Meeting House (Old Stone Church), H. Shutts in Clarksboro, David Chew's in Mantua, Jesse Chew's, S. Driver's in Barnsboro, William Dilk's near Bethel Church, Thomas and Margaret Taper's near Mantua.

GLOUCESTER CIRCUIT

In 1803, Bethel Circuit gave way to the Gloucester Circuit, actually only a change in name as the same territory was covered. Statistically the church grew from 776 members in 1803 to 1,392 members in 1828 when the Bargaintown Circuit removed Atlantic County Methodism from the Gloucester Circuit.

It is most unfortunate that most records of this circuit are not available to the researcher. If anyone can uncover the whereabouts of some of

these records he or she would do the historian of Gloucester County Methodism a real favor.

The earliest known record of this circuit is found in the Ledger Book of the Rev. J. J. Sleeper for 1840. He lists from April 26 to May 23 the date and hour of preaching at each place and the number of members. There were nineteen preaching places, some outside the County lines, with 983 members. Rev. Sleeper reports two churches (he calls them houses) built that year at Bethel and Carpenters Landing (Mantua).

These were the preaching appointments: Union (Aura), Zion (Porchtown), Little Ease (Franklinville), Malaga, Lake, Friendship (near Monroeville), Down (Downstown), Pine Hollow, Coles Mill, Squancum (Williamstown), Glassboro, Turners (Turnersville), Bethel, Carpenters Landing (Mantua), Paul's School House (Jefferson), Barnsboro, Clems Run (either Ewan or Richwood, perhaps the forerunner of both), Fislars School House (Clayton) and Franklin. Glassboro had the largest membership with 144, followed by Bethel (95), Porchtown (91) and Carpenters Landing with 82. Malaga had the smallest membership with 15.

SWEDESBORO CIRCUIT

At this time, 1840, Woodbury had its own minister. There was also a Swedesboro Circuit made up of Swedesboro, Old Stone Meeting House, Union, Ebenezer (Auburn), Clarksboro, Paulsboro, Perkin-town (Center Square), The Cove (Penns Grove), Pedricktown, Mullica Hill, and Repaupo.

CONCLUSION

I have attempted to trace in this paper the roots of Methodism in Gloucester County. Lay people planted the seed, circuit riders watered the crop and saw it grow. Organized Methodism saw classes and preaching places become societies and then churches. By 1840, there were 1,917 Methodists in the County.

Today there are at least 42 United Methodist Churches in Gloucester County with nearly 10,000 members. One of those churches is the Evangelical Church in Clarksboro. Evangelical, long known as Zion, was organized in 1880 as a church in the Evangelical Association. It was an outreach of earlier work in Glassboro among the German people. This congregation is the oldest extant congregation of the former Evangelical United Brethren Church. It represents their roots in present day United Methodism. The people called Methodists have come a long way since John Early came to Elk Township and in 1768 started preaching the gospel and inviting his neighbors to join a Methodist Class.

SOUTH SEAVILLE CAMP MEETING GROUND

CELEBRATES 125 YEARS

1863-1988

by Penny Moore

July 17, 1988 will mark the beginning of the 125th camp meeting for the South Seaville Camp Meeting Association — the oldest in the state of New Jersey.

It began in 1863 as an outgrowth of the 3-day Quarterly meetings of the Cape May County Methodist Episcopal Church, which was an open-air meeting held at the Cape May County Fairgrounds located near the intersection of Kings' Highway and the Dennisville-South Seaville Road in South Seaville and continued there for several years.

News of these meetings appeared in the two local newspapers — *The Star and Wave* of Cape May, N.J. and the *Cape May County Gazette* of Wildwood, N.J. We are indebted to them for so much information.

The whole area was one of growth. In 1861, the Cape May - Millville Railroad was built. An important stop was South Seaville, a village numbering some 500 people, including a physician. There were also a telegraph office, stores and the Fair Grounds. Since Ocean City, founded by the Lake Brothers, Beesley's Point, Dennisville, and Sea Isle City were already growing quickly in population, the train became a popular means of transportation to shore points. The August 20, 1866, *Ocean Wave* lists the following train schedule —

CAMP MEETING AT SEAVILLE

In consequence of a change in the time of Through Trains since the bills were issued for trains to and from the CAMP MEETING, a change has become necessary. They will run as follows:

GOING NORTH

Leave				
Cape Island	7:30 AM	8:00 AM	5:00 PM	5:55 PM
Bennetts	7:41 AM	8:08 AM	-----	6:06 PM
Rio Grande	7:51 AM	8:14 AM	-----	6:16 PM
CT. House	8:09 AM	8:29 AM	5:29 PM	6:29 PM
Swains	8:20 AM	8:37 AM	-----	6:32 PM
Due at				
Seaville	8:33 AM	8:48 AM	-----	6:42 PM
Leave Seaville for Cape May at 11:40 AM, 3:27 PM, 6:12 PM, 10:45 PM. The 5:55 PM to, and 10:45 PM from Seaville will be run only on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, the 24th, 25th, and 26th.				

GOING SOUTH

Leave			
Millville	10:52 AM	1:45 PM	5:06 PM
Manumuskin	11:06 AM	2:15 PM	5:24 PM
Belle Plain	-----	2:38 PM	5:43 PM
Woodbine	11:29 AM	3:00 PM	5:55 PM
Mt. Pleasant	11:34 AM	3:10 PM	6:04 PM
Due at			
Seaville	11:42 AM	3:23 PM	6:12 PM
Leave Seaville for Millville, &c. 8:48 AM and 5:45 PM			

J. Van Rensselaer

August 20, 1866

Supt. C.M. & M. R.R.

By the 1874 encampment, the camp meeting crowds were so great that it became necessary to seek a bigger and more permanent site. There were several adjoining parcels of ground for sale on the Corson Tavern -So. Seaville Road. These parcels of land, when purchased, became the 25 acre grove where we now meet. It was a lovely, tree-shaded grove with good well water and a healthy climate. A surveyor was summoned and the whole area was well plotted for a large, tented, tabernacle area, parks, streets, and available plots for 500 tents.

The sale of tents began on the new campground area on July 17, 1875. They could be paid for over a three year period. Camp meeting began that year on Monday, August 30, and the new grounds were dedicated on September 2, 1875. By the end of the encampment on September 10, glowing reports were appearing in the local papers. The *Star of the Sea* had this article in its September 8, 1875, issue:

We were one of the throng to step from the train at Seaville Station on Sunday (Sept. 5, 1875) to spend the day at the new camp ground. We found a beautiful grove of fine growth, systematically laid out in parks and avenues and quite a large number of cotton tents and comfortable cottages erected, and everything wore a bright and cheerful aspect.

Some three or four thousand persons were assembled at the morning service. Rev. Mr. Lake offered up a prayer . . . Rev. J. H. Diverty, Pres. of the Board of Managers made quite a lengthy statement of the finances . . . a collection was taken . . . Rev. Geo. Hughes of Phila., preached after dinner; Prof. Fischer known all over the Middle States as a good leader of music, taught them "Hold the Fort" and other delightful pieces of music, and infused new life into many we had begun to look upon as old . . .

A large bell is erected over the stand which rings out the signals for services, and the hours for rising and retiring. An excellent

boarding table is kept by Mr. Murphy of Phila. Wells and Corson have the refreshment stand which is . . . well managed and well stocked.

Nothing but oysters were allowed to be sold by them during the Sabbath, about eleven barrels of which were disposed of.

By the year 1876, wooden cottages were built in great numbers on lots ranging from 18 x 30 to 40 x 60 feet. Stable lots for horses and tent lots were also in demand. So popular was this camp meeting that many clergymen sought a chance to preach. Some were Dr. Thomas Hanlon, J. Coomb, Bishop Simpson, Rev. W. C. Stockton and Rev. D. W. Bartine — the latter being very long-winded according to this humorous article appearing in the *Cape May Wave* on Sept. 9, 1876.

On Sabbath morning, Rev. D. W. Bartine preached "Naaman the Leper" for 1 hr. 35 minutes, at the end of which nobody was cured, but the cerebra of many was sore. Thirty-five minutes less the extra hour would have profited more diseased than ever.

— *Cape May Wave*, Sept. 9, 1876

Featured speakers in the 1877 encampment included:

The renowned "World's Missionary," Rev. Wm. M. Taylor, late missionary to India arrived from New York and was a featured speaker; others participating included Revs. Mr. Stockton, the "war horse of the camp meeting;" W.B. Osborne; Wm. Burley, Elmer; Bro. Bailey, Cape May. Special singers were the Misses Abbie Hand, Lucy Corson, Lottie Carrol, all of Dennisville; Mrs. Allie Hayes; and Messrs. Youngs Corson, Prof. Gaskill and Rev. Eli Gifford.

The storm on the night of closing interfered materially with the interest usually manifested on such occasions.

Again a glowing report appeared in the *Cape May Wave* on September 8, 1877:

Well laid out streets, sprinkled frequently to keep down the dust, make promenading a delightful feature of a visit. Good order is preserved by a perfect system of volunteer police, and everything goes along nicely.

On Sunday, there were 5,000 persons in attendance by actual count, . . . no disorder nor rowdiness was manifested, which speaks well for the citizens of South Jersey.

We sat upon the verandah of Thad. Van Gilder's cottage on Sabbath evening and witnessed during the hour previous to public worship, a scene of rare interest and beauty. The campfires cast a lurid glare over the moving throng of well-dressed promenaders. From the youngest to the oldest there was quiet enjoyment of the occasion. It was with some difficulty that the officer whose duty it

was to stop the promenaders at the beginning of public worship succeeded in his efforts. A little partiality seemed to be shown to the ladies, who were sometime allowed to pass while the unfortunate male sex were unceremoniously turned back or brought to a stop by an unfriendly barricade.

A well-managed and beautifully prepared public boarding tent supplied all applicants with a good "square meal" at reasonable price.

Cape May Wave, Sept. 8, 1877

Continued growth was still due in part to the availability of transportation via train as well as arrangements for care of horses on the grounds at the rear of the camp ground. *The Star of the Cape*, September 11, 1879, has this account:

With the exception of one day, one which it stormed, there was a large number of visitors to the Camp. Especially on Sunday . . . Nearly every train was heavily loaded with passengers for Seaville Camp, and owing to the liberal arrangements of the West Jersey Railroad Co., both as to rates of fare and convenient arrangement of trains, hundreds of people were assembled to enjoy the advantages of the meeting who would otherwise have been deprived of that pleasure. There were by actual count, 600 carriages on the ground, and about 1,000 personnel encamping, and tho' the large numbers present, day by day, were composed of nearly all elements of society, yet the best of order prevailed. Not a single instance of rowdiness or disorder occurred, rendering the corps of police more an ornamental adjunct than a necessary appendage.

— *Star of the Cape*, Sept. 11, 1879

Included in the rules of order for the regulation of the Camp Ground were:

1. Ringing of the bell to indicate time of rising, at 6 o'clock AM
2. Ringing of bell for family prayer and breakfast, at 7 o'clock AM
3. Ringing of bell for public prayer meeting at 8 o'clock AM
4. Ringing of bell for public preaching at 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ and 10 o'clock AM
5. Dinner at 12 o'clock PM
6. Ringing of bell for public prayer meeting or children's meeting at 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ PM
7. Ringing of bell for public preaching at 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ and 3 o'clock PM
8. Ringing of bell for public preaching at 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ and 7 o'clock PM
9. At the ringing of the bell for public preaching, all persons will take their seats in the congregation, one person only allowed to stay in each tent.
10. Ringing of bell at 10 o'clock for close of exercises for the day, when all persons without accommodations on the grounds, will be required to leave the grounds by 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ o'clock PM.

11. Smoking positively prohibited within the limit of Wesley Park, said Park being the place of Public Worship.
12. No person allowed to drive carriages or other vehicles in the limits of the camp, unless necessary to carry articles to and from tents, and in such cases they are not allowed to stand any longer than it is necessary to load or unload.
13. The hitching of horses within the inclosure of the camp is positively forbidden at all times.
14. All tent holders are required to keep their garbage in some vessel, that it can be readily removed when called for by the sanitary committee.

A SPECIAL POLICE FORCE has been appointed
by the Governor of the State.
J.M. Townsend, Chief of Police

N.B. — All persons indebted to the association for lots, are requested to call at the office at their earliest convenience and settle their second installment with R.S. ROBINSON, the secretary of the association; and all persons requiring leases can obtain the same by paying full amount of cost of lot.

By order of the directors,
JESSE H. DIVERTY J.M. TOWNSEND S.B. JARMAN
J.F. MORELL JAMES L. HAND SUMNER MARCY
THOS. CRANDOL T.S. RUSSEL JOS. E. ALLEN

The many services listed above did not discourage the crowds of worshippers in the least. Attendance listed in the *Cape May County Gazette*, September 11, 1880:

There were 8,000 people on the ground on Sabbath last; 5,500 inside the circle and 2,500 in the cottages and around the outside avenues. Of this number 4,800 were females, 2,400 males, and 800 children. There were but 25 colored. The number of ministers present was 31; 400 carriages with 600 horses were counted. There were 155 cottages and tents, in which were lodged 2,000 people.

— Cape May County *Gazette*, Sept. 11, 1880

Privileges were sold to the highest bidder for small shops that sold oysters, ice cream, confectionary, tobacco and cigars, drinks, fruits, meats and groceries, bakery items, and fresh fish. There was also a barber shop. Boarding and lodging were available. There was also a place to care for horses on the outskirts of the campground.

Social issues in 1882 included TEMPERANCE issues. The temperance day speaker in that year was Rev. J.B. GRAW, D.D., editor of the *Temperance Gazette* in Camden and presiding elder of the Camden District. Other issues included child labor laws. Women especially picked up on these issues. Frances Willard and her followers waged a war against demon rum beginning in 1873.

Rev. William Stockton's famous gospel tent was replaced in 1883 with a new pavilion. Meetings were held for both children and youth alike. Meetings for all ages grew as did more homes and public feeding stables. Each addition brought an added dimension to the flourishing campground. Great speakers continued to draw people from as far away as New England. One special guest in 1886 was Gen. Clinton B. Fisk, prohibition candidate for governor of New Jersey, whose wife Jeanette Crippen Fisk became the first president of the New Jersey Conference Woman's Home Missionary Society.

Years passed and the tabernacle was enlarged, a cement floor replaced the straw, benches replaced the old planks, screens all around helped to conquer the mosquito problem and electric lights replaced the old kerosene lamps.

Would that we now could boast of the kind of attendance once so notable here on the Camp Meeting grounds at South Seaville. Attendance has improved over the past few years as has the addition of many improvements such as landscaping and outdoor lamps which make for a beautiful setting. This year, the 125th Anniversary celebration will begin on July 17 and run daily and evenings until the closing on July 31st. Extra speakers, outstanding music, skits, picnics and sing-a-longs should not only add to the festivities of the 2 weeks but should remind us why we are here—to celebrate the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord—that He lived and died on the cross for our redemption and as our theme song says, he is *COMING AGAIN*.

Do play to visit—anytime.

Penny Moore

With appreciation to —

Audrey G. Sullivan who compiled much of this material taken from the *Star and Wave*, Thomas M. Hand, Publisher, and Cape May County *Gazette*, Mr. Rafael Tammariello, Editor with permission to print and said articles appearing in her booklet *Nineteenth Century — South Jersey Camp Meeting, South Seaville, N.J. 1980*.

HISTORY OF THE KYNETT UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

by Muriel Tooker

The Kynett United Methodist Church holds the distinction of being the first year round church on Long Beach Island. Some time before 1888, a Union Sunday School was formed and met in the waiting room of the Pennsylvania Railroad Station on Third Street. Soon larger quarters were needed. The Sunday School met in the school house on Third Street between Bay and Beach Avenues. At the Annual Conference held on March 11, 1888, the day of the Blizzard of '88, had to be postponed for three days until enough Pastors could attend to form a quorum. When the Conference finally began it was voted to have the Pastor of the West Creek Methodist Episcopal Church journey to Beach Haven for the purpose of organizing a Church. The first pastor, Rev. S.J. Gwynne had to make the trip to Long Beach Island by sail boat from West Creek each Sunday.

The church was organized on May 5, 1888 and was called the Methodist Episcopal Church of Beach Haven, Ocean County, New Jersey. In October of 1888 a lot was purchased on the east side of Beach Avenue between Centre and Second Street. A church was erected in 1890. A house located across the street on Beach Avenue was used for the parsonage. The church did not own this lot until 1961 which now is used as a parking lot.

Many people ask why the church is called the Kynett Church. It is named for Dr. Alpha Jefferson Kynett, who was a very prominent figure in the Methodist Church. He was founder of the Board of Church Extension of the Methodist Episcopal Church, one of the most important of the Home Missionary organizations. In 1867 he was selected for the office of Corresponding Secretary of the General Conference, the executive officer of the Board. He served 32 years in this position and raised a permanent loan fund of over \$6,000,000 which assisted over 11,000 churches.

In 1891 Bishop Whittaker dedicated the church. Also in 1891 the Trustees purchased a lot on Engleside Avenue for \$400.00. Dr. E.H. Williams had the parsonage built on this lot and presented it to the church. An earlier history states "the Ladies of the church furnished the parsonage lavishly, and they have worked year after year to make the parsonage a pleasant and comfortable home."

The Terrace church built a new parsonage in 1981 on Long Beach

Boulevard in Beach Haven Terrace. The Assistant Pastor, Richard Richmond, and his family occupied the Engleside Avenue parsonage from June 1981 until June 1985. At this writing tenants are renting the parsonage on Engleside Avenue.

In 1900 the Trustees purchased the corner lot at Centre Street and Beach Avenue, and the next year the church was moved to this lot. Dr. Williams, who presented us with the parsonage, aided us financially in moving the church. The lot to the north of the church was left vacant.

A Friends Meeting House had stood since 1882 on the lot at the north east corner of Second Street and Beach Avenue. In 1908 Mr. Walter W. Pharo gave this building to the Trustees of the Free Public Library of Beach Haven. In turn, the Trustees of the Church made an agreement with the Trustees of the Free Public Library, which allowed them to use the lot on which the church had formerly stood. The Friends Meeting House was then moved to this site.

When the Friends built their meeting house, they stipulated certain restrictions on its use in keeping with their religious views. These restrictions have always been honored.

In 1924 the Pharo family gave a beautiful new library to the town. In May 1929, the Trustees of the Free Public Library deeded the former Friends Meeting House to the Kynett Church. Since then it has served as our Parish House.

The Original church was destroyed by fire on Palm Sunday, March 20, 1932. For the rest of 1932 services were held in the Beach Haven Fire House. On August 15, 1932 the corner stone of the new church was laid. Work progressed so well that on January 15, 1933 services were resumed in the new church with Dr. A.E. DeMaris as the speaker. On August 22, 1933, Dr. DeMaris, of the New Brunswick district, and Dr. Fox, pastor of St. Paul's church in Ocean Grove dedicated the new building. The Rev. E. Stanley Jones delivered the evening address. Many were turned away for lack of standing room.

Our church grew as the years went by, and the need for additional space for the Sunday School became urgent. In 1954 the Trustees passed a resolution to provide this space and also a pastor's study. Also in 1954 we began to have an early service on summer Sundays, as well as an eleven o'clock service.

The first of three crusades to raise money for an addition was in May 1955. It was called "Building For God Crusade." It was so successful that ground for the new extension was broken on April 7, 1957. The addition was to connect the church with the Parish House. The location of the

chancel was changed to the south end of the church and the position of the pews was reversed. This change was to allow for the expansion of congregational seating into the addition, which has been used many times.

In the summer of 1956, the church reached out beyond the Island. Our services were broadcast over Station WMID in Atlantic City.

April 27, 1958 was a memorable day. The new addition was consecrated with the District Superintendent Benjamin H. Decker as the speaker.

The men from this church and the Terrace got together and organized United Methodist Men. Their Charter Night was held March 9, 1959 and they have carried on an interesting program ever since.

For several years a committee had been working to buy chimes for the church. Their efforts were successful, and in August 1960 the chimes were installed.

In 1962 a Perpetual Endowment Fund was created. This fund has grown from gifts in memory of loved ones, and income from this has helped in various ways.

On April 25, 1971, the mortgage for the extension was burned at the Sunday morning service. This culminated the efforts of sixteen years of devotional giving through three major financial crusades. The speaker at this ceremony was very fittingly Rev. Pennington Corson, III. He had served this charge from September 1951 until September 1964. It was he who was most instrumental in planning this addition.

The Rev. Fred H. Bowen served from September 1964 until June 1975. Under his direction, two rooms were completed on the second floor of the addition. In October of 1975, we had another impressive ceremony. One of the second floor rooms was dedicated in honor of Reverend Fred H. Bowen and Mrs. Jessie Coole. Mrs. Coole had for many years been a Sunday School teacher and member of the Official Board. She was at this date 97 years of age. The other room was dedicated to the memory of Thomas F. Kelley, who had been a devoted member and worker in the church, and had been most instrumental in acquiring the chimes. (He died in May 1974 at the age of 50.)

On this day in October, a refurbished lounge on the first floor was dedicated in honor of Alice B. Cranmer who has served for years as president of the Women's Society of Christian Service, now known as the United Methodist Women.

Dr. J. Hillman Coffee came in June 1975. Two years later the gift of a carillon was presented to augment our chimes.

Our parking lot, which was purchased in 1961 was at last paved in 1978 with spaces designated for forty cars. A handbell choir was formed by combined members of this church and the Terrace in 1978. Thirty-seven bells were purchased all dedicated to the memory of or in honor of church members. This choir, as well as the church choir, was led by Miriam Coffee, and the bell choir performed several times a year.

An assistant pastor came in 1981 through the kindness of the Terrace Church. This meant that work with the youth could continue throughout the year. Rev. Richard Richmond, the assistant pastor served until June 1985 when he graduated from Theological School at Princeton, and he and his family moved to Michigan.

Daily Vacation Bible School had been held at the Terrace Church for several years. In 1983, and again in 1984 it was held at the Kynett Church.

Our large stained glass window received considerable repair and a protective window added to the outside in 1983.

In the summer of 1984 a new roof was put on the Christian Education Building. This roof was from the flat part only and did not include the dormers.

Dr. Eldrich C. Campbell came in June 1984. The congregation enjoys his wit and wisdom. Through his leadership, the church is now engaged in the project "RENOVATE IN '88". Numerous repairs to the building and tower are to be completed by our 100th anniversary in May 1988.

MINISTERS WHO SERVED THE KYNETT UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

1888 —	Edmund S. J. Gwynn
1889 — 1890	Herbert M. Smith
1891 — 1893	M. B. Rockhill
1893 — 1894	M. B. Rockhill
1894 — 1897	J. F. Cordova
1898 — 1899	L. R. Janney
1899 — 1900	J. W. Tower
1901	W. A. Massey
1901	W. E. Blackiston
1902 — 1904	Dickerson Moore
1905 — 1907	Alexander Corson
1908 — 1909	George S. Goff
1910 — 1911	George W. Yard
1912 — 1913	H. E. Garrison
1914 — 1915	H. S. Cranmer
1916 — 1917	W. J. Sayer
1917 — 1918	L. J. Hill
1918 — 1921	Howard N. Amer
1922 — 1923	R. L. Cooper
1924 — 1925	Aurice Parsells
1926 — 1927	W. N. Pike
1928 — 1930	W. R. Guffick
1931 — 1936	E. H. Cloud
1936 — 1938	W. E. Morris
1938 — 1941	W. A. Molyneaux
1941 — 1942	E. T. Weeks
1943 — 1948	Sanford M. Haney
1948 — 1951	A. D. Curry
1951 — 1964	Pennington Corson, III
1964 — 1975	Frederick H. Bowen
1975 — 1984	Rev. Dr. Hillman Coffee
1984 —	Rev. Dr. Eldrich C. Campbell

ANNA OLIVER: A GENUINE REFORMER

by Alfredo Torres Cintron

"I have made almost every conceivable sacrifice to do what I believe God's will.

Brought up in a conservative circle in New York City, that held it a disgrace for a woman to work, surrounded with the comforts and advantages of ample means, and trained in the Episcopal Church

I gave up home, friends and support, went counter to prejudices that had become second nature to me, worked for several years to constant exhaustion, and suffered cold, hunger, and loneliness.

The things hardest for me to bear were laid upon me. For two months my own mother did not speak to me. When I entered the house she turned and walked away. When I sat at the table she did not recognize me.

I have passed through tortures to which the flames of martyrdom would be nothing, for they would end in a day.

And through all this time and to-day, I could turn off to positions of comparative ease and profit.

However, I take no credit to myself for enduring these trials, because at every step it was plain to me, that I had no alternative

but to go forward or renounce my Lord." ¹

The above words are those of Anna Oliver (1840-1892), a remarkable woman of the nineteenth century. She was described by the Rev. Anna Howard Shaw (a contemporary) as a woman who "undertook to open the doors of some of the theological schools of the orthodox churches." ² Rev. Anna H. Shaw also provided a description of Anna Oliver:

"She was a devoted Christian, eminently orthodox, and a very good worker in all lines of religious work . . . She was much loved by her class." ³

Physically, she was described as a "slight built young woman with coal black eyes, brown hair, and very graceful manners." ⁴

WOMEN AND METHODISM

John Wesley wrote in defense of women preachers in his letter to Mary Bosanquet.⁵ In this letter Wesley wrote in defense of women preachers, particularly if they had an extraordinary call.

In America women played an important role in the development of Methodism. Methodist women of the nineteenth century were involved in more than just knitting:

"They pressed their church to change. When they found establishment or organizations too male-dominated, they formed organizations of their own, such as the Women's Foreign Missionary Society (1869) and the Women's Home Missionary Society (1880)." ⁶

One such woman was the Rev. Anna Oliver. Born in 1840 as Viviana Olivia Snowden, she later changed her name to Anna Oliver, a variation of her first and middle names. Her intention was to keep from embarrassing her distinguished and scholarly family. (See "Biographical Supplement, Appendix A)

In 1868, after the Civil War, Anna Oliver volunteered as a home missionary to teach black children in Mississippi. She resigned a year later when she found that the Mission Board was paying male teachers twice as much.

In 1869 after returning home from Mississippi and being unwelcomed by her family, Anna Oliver went to Cincinnati to study art and to continue her work in the temperance movement. During this period of her life, Anna Oliver felt called to the ministry.

In 1872, having already received an M.A. From Rutger's Female Institute, Anna Oliver went to Oberlin College for a year of theological study. She discovered that while Oberlin's official policy welcomed all educationally qualified students, there still was much discrimination against women in the theological school.

Rev. Anna Howard Shaw records that in 1873 Anna Oliver wrote to many of the theological schools asking admission, and finally Boston University (Divinity School) granted her request and admitted Miss Oliver as one of the regular students. According to William T. Smith, church historian of the Passaic church, "on that date the School of Theology of Boston University recognized the capabilities of this bright, cultured young woman." ⁷ Despite unbelievable obstacles, she earned the bachelor of divinity degree from Boston Divinity School in 1876. It is reported that among the number of distinguished scholars in the class, Anna Oliver was chosen to give the final oration on "Christian Enterprise: Its Field and Reward." Incidentally, Anna Oliver was the first woman in America to attain that degree.

After graduation, the main issue for Anna Oliver became her ambition to be ordained by her church. In September of 1876, Anna Oliver was sent to pastor the First Methodist Episcopal Church (formerly St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church) in Passaic, New Jersey. This church had just acquired a handsome building and also, unfortunately, a

handsome debt, creating a very embarrassing situation. The church called Anna Oliver, quite possibly with a view to saving money on the minister's salary. William T. Smith describes Anna Oliver's arrival to Passaic:

"On September 17 (1876), with only fifteen people in the congregation, there appeared in the pulpit, fresh from theological school, the 'girl preacher', the Rev. Anna Oliver. Her theme for the sermon as 'Singleness of Aim.'" ⁸

Mr. Smith reports that beginning on September 20, 1873, there was a critical financial crisis in the country. This crisis threatened the existence of St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church. Although the members of the congregation worked hard to avoid foreclosure, by August of 1876, the foreclosure procedure forced a new church society to be formed, and on August 17, 1876, the First Methodist Episcopal Church came into existence.⁹

After only four months as pastor, Anna Oliver brought the church through a great financial crisis with great success:

"The financial pendulum finally began to swing and soon the church began to prosper . . . the floating debt of \$3,000 was soon reduced, the back interest on the mortgage was paid, and all running expenses were covered."

The church had been built with a seating capacity of 800 but at times there were 1,000 persons crowded into the church.

The First Methodist Episcopal Church of Passaic was indeed prospering; prospering so much that, as was the custom of the time, the pews were being rented, sometimes for as much as \$5 to \$50 each." ¹⁰

It wasn't long before this prosperity was noted by the Annual Conference, and, as a result, Anna Oliver was not re-appointed to the Passaic church, but was replaced with a white male preacher, the Rev. James R. Bryant — a regularly-ordained pastor, who would be paid twice the salary of Anna Oliver! Furthermore, despite a reported increase in church membership of 500 percent, the Newark Annual Conference refused to recognize her even as a "Supply Pastor."

During 1877 Anna Oliver scheduled a combined series of revival services and lectures. The meetings were held on Wednesday nights. One night the speaker was a famous Methodist black evangelist by the name of Amanda Smith. Miss Smith became Anna Oliver's pastoral assistant. A local newspaper reporter had this to say about this duo:

"Between them Passaic is having a lively time; what with stirring up sinners and Christians on one hand, and on the other two women in the pulpit, and one black, the buzzing grows apace." ¹¹

Anna Oliver was a woman committed to the city of Passaic. During her pastorate, she proposed a three-point reform for the city:

1. Close liquor traffic in the city
2. Educational reform: schools should teach vocational skills
3. Adoption of the homeless children in the city

Anna Oliver's preaching was efficacious. A reporter for the *New York Methodist* (10/28/1876) commented on this slip of a preacher, in curls and petticoats, and equipped with a knowledge of the two inspired tongues:

"Her eloquence has filled the church overflowing; her combined tenderness and power have won for her numerous admirers from all denominations, who profess themselves willing to follow her into any church she may occupy."

ANNA OLIVER'S THEOLOGY: A CHALLENGE TO THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF 1880

A key year in the life and ministry of Anna Oliver is 1880, the year the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church met in Cincinnati, Ohio. Nancy Hardesty has described the event as "a consciousness-raising experience." ¹¹ Anna Oliver petitioned the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church as the church of her choice. She called for the Bishops and Brethren of the Church to apply the Golden Rule as they considered the Conference vote regarding the ordination of women. In that year, both Anna Oliver and Anna H. Shaw challenged the General Conference to ordain women whom it had graduated in its schools and upon whom it had conferred the degree of bachelor of divinity. These women were not alone, for in that same year a Mrs. Mary L. Griffiths, from Mauch Chunk, Pennsylvania had sent "A Statement of Appeal to the General Conference." She reminded the Conference:

"That there are at least twice as many women as men in the average church membership. In this two-third majority resides a moral, spiritual, social and financial power without which we can hardly imagine the church existing at all; yet . . . there is a sex-line drawn, shutting women out." ¹²

Furthermore, Mrs. Griffiths, along with a number of prominent women, asked that "masculine nouns and pronouns" referring to trustees, class leaders, Sunday school superintendents, and local preachers be removed and that "the word 'male' be expunged entirely" from the

Discipline.

By the time Anna Oliver presented her case to General Conference, she had already received a local preacher's license from a parish in a Boston suburb where she did field work as a student. She had also been recommended as a candidate for Deacon's Orders to the New England Conference, however, Bishop Andrews refused to submit her nomination to the conference for a vote. ¹³

It is in this brief document — "Test Case on the Ordination of Women" — that Anna Oliver's theology of ministry is fleshed out. Anna Oliver argued for an affirmation of her call to pastoral, not evangelistic ministry. She was so convinced about the genuineness of her call that she wrote:

"I am so thoroughly convinced that the Lord has laid commands upon me in this direction, that it becomes with me really a question of my own soul's salvation. If the Lord commands me to just the course I am pursuing, as only they that do His commandments have right to the tree of life, I have no alternative." ¹⁴

Anna Oliver was thoroughly convinced that God's grace would be sufficient for her to stand where God commanded her to stand, and to speak what God commanded her to speak: "I can do no otherwise, and God takes all the responsibility."

In her "Test Case" Anna Oliver delineated her reasons for seeking the ordination of women:

1. I do not believe in evangelistic work as usually carried on, i.e. to warm up cold churches and start revivals.
2. The work of an evangelist is unsuited to women — certainly to me.
3. Pastoral work is adapted to women, for it is motherly work. I recognize this field as suited to my natural qualifications.
4. My interest begins with conversions. Then an evangelist leaves.
5. I cannot endure to preach old sermons. I have subjects in my mind that will not let me rest until I work them up. To do so would be better for my present and future usefulness, and my own growth in grace.
6. As a pastor my interest daily increases. I would rather toil quietly in a corner with a handful of persons, seeing believers sanctified, and families transformed . . .
7. In evangelistic work I always saw some harm done, even where the most good was accomplished . . . as an evangelist, my own spiritual growth was hindered, . . . on the other hand, in my present charge and in Passaic the Lord has visited me with

wonderful manifestations of his presence, and I realize in myself spiritual progress.

8. When the Lord calls one to preach, He always calls persons to hear . . . In less than two years thirteen churches desired me for the pastor. But the ecclesiastical authorities refused to appoint a woman, preferring in some instances to close or sell the church buildings.
9. God sanctions my pastoral work. In proof of this I appeal to the record in Passaic, N.J. and Brooklyn, N.Y.

In the next section, Anna Oliver refutes the idea that she is somehow mistaken in her call. She states: "It is a great pity for myself that I cannot be convinced that I am mistaken — a pity that I have lived in this delusion all these years." ¹⁵

Anna Oliver could not conceive God as a Father who would either lead or leave a child of His in such a delusion — "a child whom He knows, as He knows my heart, desires nothing else so much as to learn the Father's will to do it." Furthermore, Anna Oliver was certain that God had sanctioned her course:

"At every step He has met me. He opened avenues of self-support while I was pursuing my studies. When I resigned loved ones, the joy of His presence more than compensated, so that trials have been no trials, for at all times He has given me the victory.

I have been enabled through all, to rejoice evermore, and in everything to give thanks." ¹⁶

In spite of Anna Oliver's clear, concise, and genuine plea for the right of ordination, the General Conference of 1880 voted "no." Rev. Anna H. Shaw commented that "it not only did this, but it took a step backward; it took from us (Anna Shaw and Anna Oliver) the licenses which had been granted to me for eight years and to Miss Oliver for four years." ¹⁷ In essence they told these women to go home and forget ordination. The official decision was recorded thusly in the *Book of Discipline*:

"Resolved, That women have already all the rights and privileges in the Methodist Church that are good for them, and that it is not expedient to make any change in the books of discipline that would open the doors for their ordination to the ministry." ¹⁸

Anna Oliver was a woman of great character. A woman who, in the midst of apparent defeat, could affirm: "Let not the sympathies of my friends in the Conference be taxed, imagining that I am, or under any circumstances will be, in the least discouraged. I encourage myself in the Lord my God." ¹⁹ This encouragement enabled her to see herself as a conqueror in the present and in the future: "In the future, I intend in the

strength of God to go forward as in the past, joyfully." ²⁰ Echoing the words of St. Paul, Anna Oliver proclaimed: "In all I am more than conqueror through Him to whom be all glory." Nevertheless, women in the Methodist church would have to wait until the next century (1956) to be given the right of being recognized as ordained ministers of the church. ²¹

After her ministry in Passaic (1876-1877) Anna Oliver went to the Brooklyn Methodist Episcopal Church. Actually, it was a former Methodist Episcopal church that was swamped with a heavy debt, and those holding the mortgage sold the building. Once again, with great courage she bought a church in which a man had failed as minister, and with a debt of \$14,000. During her ministry there she continued to be involved in social issues. Nevertheless, "despite gifts from friends from Kansas to Massachusetts, finances finally conquered the pastor of the great experiment. In March of 1883 the church was abandoned . . ." ²²

According to a report in the *Christian Advocate* (New York):

"The attempt to force the ordination of women upon the Church by buying a church, and making its retransfer to our Denomination conditional upon a change without warrant in Scripture, precedent, necessity, or general desire, did not succeed. Whether woman shall preach is not an issue on which to make a new sect; especially whether any particular woman shall be supported in the ministry." ²³

Rev. Anna H. Shaw believed that Anna Oliver broke down because she undertook to do the work of a man as well as the work of a woman. She also started at least a dozen reforms (ex. dress reform, and nurses for sick and suffering women) and she undertook to carry them all out! Rev. Shaw commented on the results:

"So her (Anna Oliver's) health failed, and she was attacked by the great Methodist paper (*Christian Advocate*), for Rev. Dr. Buckley declared that he would destroy her influence in the church, and so with the great organ behind him he attacked her. She had the great organ to fight, the great church to fight, and the world to fight, and the devil to fight, and she broke down in health." ²⁴

In 1883, Anna Oliver resigned her position as pastor of the Brooklyn Church and went to Europe. According to Anna Shaw she went abroad to recover her health, and did in a measure recover, but came home only to die. She settled in Connecticut where she died in 1892, at the age of 52.

The Rev. Anna Howard Shaw, addressing the Convention of the American Suffrage Association in Washington in January of 1893, spoke these moving words about Anna Oliver:

"Miss Anna Oliver . . . she was a genuine reformer; she had the courage of her convictions; she had faith in God and faith in humanity, and believed that the time would come when there would be no distinction between men and women anywhere, but that where there was work to do she could go, and go freely. I believe that those who have done their work faithfully and gone before, but who have not seen their reward, will know when the hour of our triumph comes, and shall be happy with those who gather the fruits of the harvest."²⁵

Perhaps the challenge for us United Methodists of the twentieth century is to be loyal to each other; let us love one another . . . let us stand loyally side by side, so that when we shall have passed away, those we leave behind us shall be able to say that we were faithful to the cause, and triumphed in its faith.

At the conclusion of the Christmas Eve service of 1886 in the Methodist Episcopal Church of Passaic, N.J. the Reverend Anna Oliver offered the following benediction:

"May the holy spirit baptize this Church with the baptism of love, and guard from it forever all things which tend to disturb the harmony necessary to worship our God in spirit and truth."²⁶

Today, the members of the First United Methodist Church of Passaic continue to remember the life and ministry of Rev. Anna Oliver. The bell which hung in the belfry of the church Anna Oliver pastored and loved, rings out every year in her beloved memory as a constant reminder that our church must continue to affirm clearly and protect the equal rights of all minorities as it seeks to be authentically inclusive in word and deed.

ANNA OLIVER: BIOGRAPHICAL SUPPLEMENT

A writer in the *Weekly Item* (2/24/1877, Passaic, N.J.) reported these facts about Anna Oliver's lineage:

"She is the grand daughter of Robert Bogardus, the well-known lawyer of some years ago, who was the General commanding at New York in the War of 1812, and he a lineal descendant of old Everardus Bogardus, the first Dutch pastor of New York . . .

"Miss Oliver is the sister of the Rev. R. B. Snowden of Prospect Avenue, Brooklyn, lately ordained an Episcopal minister . . .

"She is also the descendant of a long line of preachers and lawyers, and of a connection which includes the late Professor Morse, President Woodsey, and Professor Salisbury, of Yale College; Rear-Admiral Breese, the two Commodore Parkers, of the United States and Confederate navies, and President Carter, of Western Reserve College, Ohio."

("Rev. Anna Oliver's Trials in the Passaic Pulpit" p. 3, col. 4-5)

ENDNOTES

- ¹ "Test Case for the Ordination of Women", by Anna Oliver.
- ² "Proceedings of the 25th Suffrage Convention", p. 36.
- ³ Ibid, p. 37.
- ⁴ *Oberlin Review*, August 4, 1875.
- ⁵ John Wesley's *Works* (Jackson Edition) *Letters: V:257*.
- ⁶ Dr. Ken Rowe, Lecture. See also *Women & Religion* and *Women Called to Witness*.
- ⁷ *Congressional Record*, Vol. 122, No. 84..
- ⁸ "Centennial Celebration" by William T. Smith.
- ⁹ *Congressional Record*.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Hardesty, *Women Called to Witness*, p. 22.
- ¹² *Christian Advocate* (Cincinnati) May 25, 1880.
- ¹³ Dr. Ken Rowe, Lecture.
- ¹⁴ "Test Case", p. 3.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., p. 5.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., p. 6.
- ¹⁷ *History of Woman Suffrage*, p. 784.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., p. 785.
- ¹⁹ "Test Case", pg. 6
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Norwood, *The Story of American Methodism*, p. 416.
- ²² Dr. Ken Rowe, Lecture.
- ²³ *Christian Advocate* (New York) March 22, 1883, Vol. 58, No. 12
- ²⁴ *Proceedings of 25th Suffrage Convention*, p. 38.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ *The Weekly Item* (Passaic Newspaper), December 30, 1876.

"Nothing happens by chance;
all reforms are the growth of much anxiety
and sacrifice on the part of a few who are
willing to give themselves and count no cost
of the things that push along the idea which
their conscience tells them is right . . ."

— F. R. Elliot

Leader in the movement of laity rights for women

"Woman will bless and brighten
every place she enters, and she will
enter every place."

— Frances E. Willard

President, Women's Christian Temperance Union

"The church that silences the women
is shorn of half its power."

— Charles Finney

HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Near the small town of Lumberton, stands a little two-story stucco farm home. It was undoubtedly built two hundred or more years ago. In the early 1800's it was home to a Methodist by the name of Azail Coate. Two of Azail's brothers were Methodist preachers, Michael and Samuel, and are much better known than he. Yet Azail had the privilege of entertaining Bishop Francis Asbury in his unpretentious home on April 17, 1807. Later, in 1814, the tired and very ill bishop spent twelve weeks being nursed back to health by this kind family.

Now, almost 175 years later, it is possible that the Azail Coate home may come into United Methodist hands and be permanently preserved as a museum of church and community. An offer has been made to deed this building and one acre of land to the Lumberton United Methodist Church for restoration and preservation. April 26, 1988 a joint meeting of the Conference Historical Society and Commission on Archives and History will meet in Lumberton Church to consider ways of advancing this project. Anyone interested in assisting in these efforts can contact the pastor of Lumberton Church, the Rev. Harry D. Teat, 6 Woodstock Court, Mt. Holly, NJ 08060; the Historical Society President, Mrs. Penny Moore, 21 Coke Ave., P.O. Box 459, South Seaville, NJ 08246; or the Commission Chairman, the Rev. Walter Jesuncosky, III, 308 Kates Blvd., Millville, NJ 08332.

The Society's 1987 annual meeting and tour brought a large group to historic Bridgeton for a tour of the city's churches and historic community places. Bridgeton had just celebrated its 300th birthday. The 1988 spring tour will be a 3 day event to Boston, Massachusetts. The 1989 tour will probably be in the Princeton, N.J. area.

Your support of the Historical Society is most helpful. Dues are \$4.00 per person or \$6.00 a couple per year. Last year we had 249 members. This year we want to top 300. There is also a Benjamin Abbott Life Membership at \$50.00 per person or church. Please send your dues to Mrs. Edna Molyneaux, 768 East Garden Road, Vineland, NJ 08360. Ideas or manuscripts for possible publication in *The Historical Trail* are always solicited. Contact the Editor, Dr. J. Hillman Coffee, RD #1, Sooy Place Road, Vincentown, NJ 08088.

Copies of *What God Has Wrought*, history of the SNJ Conference, can still be purchased at \$14 plus \$1.75 for postage and handling from:

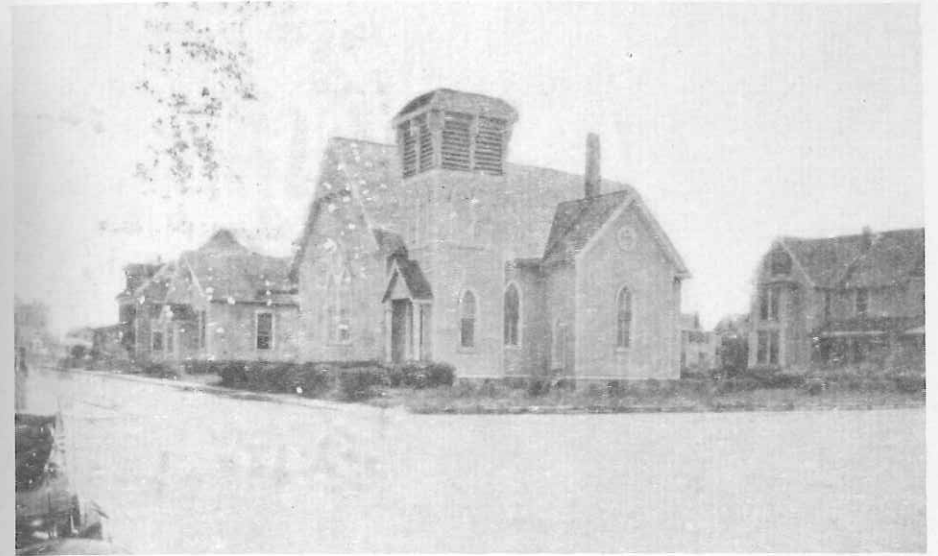
Southern N.J. Conference Office
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REV. ROBERT B. STEELMAN
HISTORIAN

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE
SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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